

Reading Toolkit: Grade 4 Objective 3.A.6.a

Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Literary Text

Indicator 6. Determine important ideas and messages in literary texts

Objective a. Identify and explain main ideas and universal themes

Assessment Limits:

In the text or a portion of the text

In the text or a portion of the text

Literal versus interpretive meanings of a text or a portion of text

Literal versus interpretive meanings of a text or a portion of text

Message, moral, or lesson learned from the text

Message, moral, or lesson learned from the text

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Lesson Seeds

Reading Grade 4 Objective 3.A.6.a

Activities

The teacher will place students in small groups and provide them with a literary text. After reading the text, students will be given envelopes which contain sentence strips. The sentence strips will list the main idea of the literary text, supporting details for that main idea, and details that do not support the main idea. The group of students must isolate the main idea and its supporting details from the available materials. Students will share their answers with other class members.

After students have read a required literary text, they will discuss the passage. During class discussion, the teacher will record the important ideas in the passage and ask students to give him/her supporting details for those important ideas. When the discussion is concluded, the teacher will place the students in small groups. Each group will be asked to create an alternate title for the passage and then present it to the rest of the class. During the presentation students will show how their title reflects an important idea in the passage.

Prior to reading, students will be asked to share times when someone did something kind for them or they were kind to another. The teacher will state that kindness is often a topic for themes in literary works. Students will then read Shel Silverstein's "The Giving Tree" or a like-themed literary passage. While students read these passages they should record the ways in which kindness is shown in these texts. After reading, students should share with the entire class the evidences of kindness they found. Next, with teacher assistance, students should form a theme statement for the text. Following this, the teacher should place students into small groups giving each group a text which they must read and analyze to complete the following chart.

Title	Theme Topic	Supporting Details for Theme	Theme Statement	Application to Real Life Situations

As texts are passed from one group to another, each text should be entered on the chart. Once all groups have seen all the texts, students will share their responses with the other members of the class.

As students read a novel or any longer literary work, they will track the development of theme. When appropriate at certain stages in the novel, teacher and students will isolate theme topics and will develop theme statements. In small groups or as an entire class with teacher direction, students will trace the beginning of the theme to its conclusion. Students will identify the origin of the theme. Did it begin with character, setting, or conflict or a combination of elements? Teacher Note: A suggested way for students to see the interrelatedness of narrative elements is to map the novel's plot and then alongside plot the origin and development of the theme/s. Once students have completed tracking the theme, in a class or small group discussion they should apply the theme to real-life situations.

Clarification

Reading Grade 4 Indicator 3.A.6

To show proficiency of the skills stated in this indicator, a reader will express an understanding of the key points or thoughts in a literary text which are the **important ideas and messages**. Sometimes these points are stated directly in the text. For other more complex texts, a reader must determine an implied, important idea or message by synthesizing ideas across the text.

To **identify, explain, and analyze main ideas and universal themes**, a reader must first identify the main idea of a text or a portion of a text. In order to do this, a reader must identify the topic or subject of the text. To determine what an author of a literary text has to say about the topic, a reader must attend to details that relate to or clarify the topic. This combination of topic and details forms the main idea. The main idea may be directly stated or implied and may appear in any portion of a text.

While a main idea is text-centered, a theme is author-centered. A story's theme is an author's message about a topic. To identify a theme of a literary text, a reader must first find broader important concepts in a text such as family, prejudice, courage, or love. A reader must observe carefully what characters say and do that relates to the theme topic. A theme is a combination of a "big" idea and what is said about that idea. A theme is a recurring idea in a text, but it also moves outside the text and applies to people in general, not just the characters in the story.

In more complex texts, theme can arise not only from character statements and actions but also from emotional and societal issues experienced by characters. These issues can be observed in changes in characters' values or beliefs, symbols, repeated words, or imagery. Readers can bring different interpretations to a text based upon their personal experiences. If evidence from a text can be provided to support a reader's suggestion about theme, then it is valid.

To **identify, explain, and analyze a similar idea or theme in more than one text**, a reader must first identify an idea or theme in each literary text. Once ideas or theme statements for each text are established, comparison between or among the texts can begin.

A reader may focus on similar ideas contained in multiple texts. A reader may focus on morals or lessons learned by characters contained in multiple texts. For younger readers, multicultural renderings of the same fairy tale are common. The conclusions drawn from similar texts are text-specific and based on many supporting details from each text.

A reader may focus on common experiences, emotions, issues, and ideas as sources for theme topic and statements in texts. The best conclusions drawn about theme across multiple texts are text specific, based on many supporting details from all texts. As comparisons among text themes continue, each theme must be analyzed carefully. Not only should the theme statement be considered but also how the author relayed the theme to the reader. For example, in one text, the strongest source for theme may have been character action, while in another text, the strongest source for theme may have been imagery. However, both texts may have similar themes that have been developed in different ways.

To **retell, paraphrase, or summarize a text**, a reader must first read and know the basic narrative elements of a text: the setting, character, and story events. When retelling, a reader must share the story in his/her own words, keeping story events in order.

Paraphrasing allows a reader to take a more complex text and make it understood by placing difficult ideas into simpler language. When a reader can tell a story in words that make sense to him/her, that reader is paraphrasing. As lengths of stories increase, multiple characters appear, and changes in setting occur within a text, paraphrasing increases in complexity.

When a reader can distinguish between necessary and unnecessary ideas and recount only the important ideas in his/her own words, he/she is summarizing. When summarizing, a critical reader paraphrases the important text. As texts grow in complexity, summarizing allows a reader to focus on the essential elements of a literary passage.

To **reflect on, identify, and explain personal connections to the text**, a reader must consider all elements of a literary text: setting, character, story events, mood, tone, and theme. Next, a reader must consider his/her personal experiences and relate them to one or more elements of a text. A reader might consider himself/herself or a friend or family member to be like a character from a text. A reader might discover that his/her attitude toward a particular subject mirrors an author's tone toward the same subject. A reader might hold the same belief revealed in a theme statement or find himself/herself in direct opposition to the idea in a theme. Once this connection is established, a critical reader is able to define how this connection is made and to construct meaning from a text, citing both text and personal details.

To **explain the implications of the text for the reader and/or society**, a reader must first consider ideas from a text that involve the reader in a personal way. A source for such ideas could be the events that befall certain characters, unfamiliar settings, the author's tone toward certain subjects, or thematic development of the text. A critical reader should define the literary element and then explain the level of involvement with that element and the effect it has had upon the reader's thinking. For example, a reader who has always been ambivalent about preserving the forests might alter his/her opinion after reading a text where forest preservation is promoted through theme. Through the explanation, the reader clarifies his/her own thought processing and makes his/her position clear to others.

Public Release Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

Question

Read "One Little Can" and answer the following question.

Something that is contagious spreads from one person to another. Explain how something in this story becomes contagious. Use details from the story in your explanation. Write your answer in your answer book.

Annotated Student Responses

The story becomes contagious in two different ways. At first it was contagious because once one person began throwing trash on the ground others thought it was ok. Once Rachel picked up that trash it began to change people. Now Lee picked his trash, Mrs. Polansky saw him and decided that she should do that. Other people on the street saw and they thought that that was right. That's how the story was contagious.

Score for Sample Student Response #1: Rubric Score 3

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text. The student addresses the demands of the question by identifying two ways things were contagious in the story; "...once one person began throwing trash on the ground others thought it was ok," and then described how the clean up became contagious. The student effectively uses text information to clarify the explanation; "Once Rachel picked up that trash it began to change people. Now Lee picked his trash, Mrs. Polansky ...decided that she should do that. Other people...thought that was right."

How something gets contagious:

Mr. Lee saw that Rachel kicked the can and then put in the trash can, so Mr. Lee thought about that girl all day and started picking up trash in the yard. Then, Mrs. Polansky saw that he was spring cleaning and thought that she could do some spring cleaning by gardening.

Score for Sample Student Response #2: Rubric Score 2

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a general understanding of the text. The student uses text-relevant information, relating how one event in the story leads to another event which shows "how something gets contagious."

In this story things can be contagious because once some one litters people start to litter more and people don't want to pick it up.

Score for Sample Student Response #3: Rubric Score 1

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. The student minimally addresses the demands of the question by stating: "things can be contagious because once some one litters people start to litter more...." The student's use of minimal information shows some understanding of the text in relation to the question.

When Mrs. Polansky thought that Mr. Lee was a bad person, she watched out her window and told herself that Mr. Lee may not be a bad person after all. It said in paragraph 7 that there was trash on her doorway that keeps coming from Mr. Lee's shop.

Score for Sample Student Response #4: Rubric Score 0

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response is irrelevant to the question. The student describes how Mrs. Polansky feels about Mr. Lee rather than focusing on what is contagious in the story.

Public Release #2 - Selected Response (SR) Item

Handout(s):

- One Little Can

Reading Grade 4 Objective 3.A.6.a

Read "One Little Can" and answer the following question. Which sentence best communicates the author's message?

- A. You'll never know what you can do unless you try.
- B. Neighbors should put their trash in the trashcan.
- C. Important changes can begin with one small deed.
- D. People who make messes should clean up after themselves.

Correct Answer:

C

Public Release Item #3 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

Question

Read "One Little Can" and answer the following question. Explain whether or not "One Little Can" is a good title for this story. Use details from the story in your explanation. Write your answer in your answer book.

Annotated Student Responses

Yes, I do because the moral of this story is Important changes can begin with one small deed. That one can that Rachel picked up and threw it in the trash made a whole cycle. In the text it says, "Then she changed her mind, picked the can up, and tossed it into a litter basket on the corner." That one small deed changed that neighborhood. In conclusion Yes, One little can is a good title.

Score for Sample Student Response #1: Rubric Score 3

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text. The student addresses the demands of the question by explaining that the title is good because "important changes can begin with one small deed." The student effectively uses text-relevant information to clarify this understanding: "...one can that Rachel picked up and threw it in the trash made a whole cycle...That one small deed changed that neighborhood."

"One little can" is a good title because in the story it only took one person to pick up one little can and to throw it away in the story it said Hachel picked up a can and put it in a trash can and it only took one person to do that for everyone else to start cleaning their yard, street, and sidewalks.

Score for Sample Student Response #2: Rubric Score 2

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a general understanding of the text. The student uses text-relevant information to show understanding that the title "One Little Can" is a good title because "...in the story it only took one person to pick up one little can and to throw it away," which made "...everyone else to start cleaning their yard, street, and sidewalks."

I think it is a good title for the story because it all started with a can.

Score for Sample Student Response #3: Rubric Score 1

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. The student uses only minimal information to explain why the title is good: "it all started with a can."

When you finish with a can you should
put it in the trashcan because it
is your can and when you finish
you should put it in the trashcan.

Score for Sample Student Response #4: Rubric Score 0

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response is irrelevant to the question.

Handouts

One Little Can

By David LaRochelle

¹Rachel scowled in disgust as she walked to the school bus stop. Her neighborhood looked like a junkyard. The sidewalk was littered with newspapers and candy wrappers. The front door to Lee's Grocery was covered with ugly graffiti. It was spring, but instead of green grass and flowers, the yards seemed to be sprouting broken branches and trash.

"Yuck!" Rachel said as she brought her foot back to kick a soda can off the curb. Then she changed her mind, picked the can up, and tossed it into a litter basket on the corner. She hurried to meet her friends at the bus stop.

³Mr. Lee scowled as he looked out his grocery store window. "Hmph," he said as the girl passed by. She's probably another troublemaker, he thought. One of those kids who spray-painted graffiti all over my door. Kids today are just no good.

To confirm his suspicion, the girl stepped back to kick a piece of garbage into the street. What she did next, though, surprised him. She bent down, picked up the old can, and dropped it into a trashcan.

⁵That's a switch, thought Mr. Lee.

All morning as he unboxed soup cans and cereal boxes, he kept picturing that girl. At noon, when he walked to the corner to mail a letter, he noticed the litter that had piled up in front of his store. He thought of that girl again, then got a broom and started sweeping the walk.

⁷Mrs. Polansky peered out from between the window blinds in her living room. A crumpled sheet of newspaper blew into her yard and got snagged on a rosebush. She hated living across the street from Lee's Grocery. Customers were always dropping their trash in front of the store, and invariably it would blow into her yard.

Maybe I should write a letter to the city council, she thought, or call the mayor. If Mr. Lee is going to let his store be such an eyesore, maybe it should be shut down.

⁹Just then Mr. Lee walked out of his door. Mrs. Polansky quickly shut the blinds, but when she peeked out again, he was sweeping up the trash on his sidewalk.

That's a change, thought Mrs. Polansky.

¹¹A few minutes later, when she went to let her cat out, she noticed that the stray newspaper had unsnagged itself from her rosebush and was tumbling into the next yard. She caught a glimpse of Ms. Sinclair, her neighbor, frowning at her from the porch.

Mrs. Polansky looked around at her own unkempt yard.

¹³"Well, Fluffy," she said to her cat, "Mr. Lee isn't the only one who can do a bit of outdoor spring cleaning."

She went inside and got her work gloves and a trash bag.

¹⁵When Rachel got off the school bus that afternoon, the first thing she noticed was the woman planting geraniums around the edges of her front walk. A fat gray cat was swatting at a butterfly that flitted among the bright red blossoms. Hadn't that yard been strewn with dead branches and soggy newspapers this morning? Several other yards looked tidier, too. She even spotted a pair of crocuses peeking up from a freshly raked garden.

When she passed Lee's Grocery, Mr. Lee was out front painting his door the color of a spring sky. He smiled at her as she walked by.

¹⁷Maybe my neighborhood doesn't look so bad after all, Rachel thought. She knelt down and picked up a lone candy bar wrapper, slam-dunked it into the litter basket, and sang out loud the rest of the way home.

Rubric - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)

Score 3

The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.

- Addresses the demands of the question
- Effectively uses text-relevant¹ information to clarify or extend understanding

Score 2

The response demonstrates a general understanding of the text.

- Partially addresses the demands of the question
- Uses text-relevant¹ information to show understanding

Score 1

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text.

- Minimally addresses the demands of the question
- Uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question

Score 0

The response is completely incorrect, irrelevant to the question, or missing.²

Notes:

¹ Text-relevant: This information may or may not be an exact copy (quote) of the text but is clearly related to the text and often shows an analysis and/or interpretation of important ideas. Students may incorporate information to show connections to relevant prior experience as appropriate.

² An exact copy (quote) or paraphrase of the question that provides no new relevant information will receive a score of "0".

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